



**U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE (BHR)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO – Complex Emergency

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Background

President Pascal Lissouba installed the Republic of the Congo's (ROC) first democratically elected government in 1992. Former President Denis Sassou-Nguesso (1979-1992) overthrew President Lissouba with the Government of Angola's support after a brief and violent civil war (the war of "June Fifth") from June to October 1997 and reassumed power on October 25, 1997. After almost a year of relative stability, civil strife in the south resumed late in 1998, which resulted in massive population displacement and prompted Ambassador Hooks to declare a disaster on October 27, 1998. Opposition forces and government troops signed a cease-fire agreement facilitated by President Omar Bongo of Gabon on December 29, 1999.

Prior to 1997, the southern region produced approximately two-thirds of the country's total agricultural and food products but the growing areas were severely damaged after the 1997 and 1998-99 civil wars. Following the civil strife, unemployment rates increased to 30% and neither the stagnant rural nor small, industrialized urban sectors have the capacity to support the population without external assistance. Insecurity led to the widespread forced displacement of an estimated 810,000 people, nearly one-third of the country's total population, into the surrounding forests, and an estimated 60,000 Congolese refugees fled into neighboring countries. These substantial population movements prompted a humanitarian response by the international community. Long-term displacement resulted in high malnutrition levels that weakened the workforce already lacking the savings, emergency assets, and agricultural tools to thwart near-universal poverty and continuing instability from regional conflicts. The health sector lacks staff and medicines, infrastructure has been destroyed by the conflict, educational enrollment has declined, and diseases such as sleeping sickness, river blindness, dysentery, and bilharzia have reemerged following widespread displacement of people in the forests. Malaria is the leading cause of death.

Numbers Affected

The United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported an improvement in the security situation following the December 1999 cease-fire, and the majority of an estimated 810,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned to their places of origin in the South Pool, Niari, Bouenza, and Lekoumou regions.

By August 2000, approximately 45,000 Congolese refugees returned from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). UNOCHA estimates that 5,280 Congolese refugees remain in the DRC, 12,500 are in Gabon, and 200 are in Central African Republic (CAR). UNOCHA reported in December 2000 that the ROC hosts approximately 126,755 refugees from neighboring countries: 20,872 fled from Angola, 6,146 from Rwanda, and 99,737 fled the current violence in the DRC.

Current Situation

Humanitarian access has greatly expanded due to recent improvements in the security situation, particularly throughout the southern region. The need for longer-term rehabilitation, such as the current need for restoring infrastructure in the health and food security sectors, has increased now that the acute emergency phase is over. However, the overall humanitarian situation remains fragile and all sectors are in a transitional stage of improvement.

The reintegration of IDPs, returnees, and demobilized youths including former militia combatants is a priority for the Government of the ROC and the international community to support a durable peace. Even though the internal conflict within the ROC has seen recent positive changes, the situation is directly and indirectly affected by ongoing regional conflicts and the continuing flow of refugees from the DRC. Humanitarian access to an estimated 99,000 refugees from the DRC, located in an increasingly insecure 800-kilometer area along the banks of the Ubangui and Congo Rivers, is limited to access along the tributaries of the Ubangui River or by requesting the refugees travel to the few accessible roads. Some refugees from the DRC have risked travel downriver towards Loukolela where UNHCR has distributed food and relief items.

Rehabilitation of the health sector and increasing the food security situation have been viewed as the first steps in lowering mortality rates caused by disease and malnutrition. Many Congolese live without even basic social services.

USG Assistance

BHR/OFDA funded five grants to the Republic of the Congo in FY 2000 in the health and food security sectors. Action Contre la Faim (ACF) received more than \$750,000 to provide therapeutic feeding to 3,500 severely malnourished residents, health services to approximately 74,000 people, and provide seeds and tools in the Pool region. BHR/OFDA provided more than \$1.3 million in FY 2000 to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to assist 400,000 war-affected children and adults and restore health and clinical services and support agriculture in the Pool Region. BHR/OFDA is currently evaluating a proposed extension of the CRS grant for FY 2001. The U.N.'s Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) received more than \$400,000 to distribute agricultural inputs and support coordination of emergency agricultural operations for 17,250 beneficiaries, and BHR/OFDA is evaluating a proposed extension for this program in FY 2001. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) received \$500,000 for nutritional surveillance and vaccination programs and for the provision of basic health care equipment and drugs to assist 200,000 people in the health sectors of the Pool, Lekoumou, Bouenza, and Niari regions. BHR/OFDA provided more than \$880,000 to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to implement a health rehabilitation project for 160,000 residents of the Dolosie region. In FY 2001, BHR/OFDA will continue to respond to the health needs of the population and to assist the Congolese in restoring their livelihoods especially in the agricultural sector.

In FY 2000, USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) provided 7,400 MT of Section 416(b) food commodities (corn soy milk blend, rice, and soy oil) to the World Food Program (WFP) with a total donation value of more than \$5.7 million. The Department of State Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) provided \$1,115,000 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), \$81,000 to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and \$239,975 to IRC for their emergency programs to assist Angolan and Congolese refugees in camps in the ROC. State/PRM also provided \$50 million to UNHCR and \$42.4 million to the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) for their Africa-wide programs, a portion of which was used in the ROC, and more than \$1 million to UNHCR, UNOCHA, and IFRC to support regional refugee-related programs, including those in the ROC. Further regional contributions to UNHCR to assist new Congolese refugees in neighboring countries or Angolan refugees in the ROC are currently being determined.

USAID/BHR/OFDA FY 2000	\$4,013,637
State/PRM FY 2000.....	\$1,435,000
USDA/FAS FY 2000.....	\$5,760,701
Total USG Assistance.....	\$11,209,338

NOTE: USAID/OFDA bulletins can be obtained from the USAID web site at http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/ofda/situation.html

USAID/BHR/OFDA FUNDED IO/NGO ACTIVITIES
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
DECEMBER 2000

